

Rep. Udall Plans '71 Bid For McCormack's Post

By JAMES DOYLE
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Rep. Morris K. Udall, D-Ariz., says he will seek the speakership of the House next January to assure that John W. McCormack's leadership is challenged.

Udall's announcement was the latest indication of growing dissatisfaction among House Democrats.

In an interview yesterday he said he would be a candidate unless another strong challenger, such as Majority Leader Carl Albert of Oklahoma, agreed to take on the fight.

Udall was a last-minute candidate against McCormack in January 1969, and received 58 votes. He needed 122 to win.

In that case McCormack had circulated a letter seeking pledges of loyalty to his leadership when there appeared to be no challenger. Udall feels this cut his votes to a bare minimum.

Won't Join Waldie

He is confident that next year the question of leadership succession will be more open than it has been in generations. He notes that in modern times a sitting speaker has never been seriously challenged.

At the same time Udall refused to join the incipient revolution announced yesterday by Rep. Jerome Waldie of California, who has proposed a vote of no-confidence in the McCormack leadership for the House Democratic caucus scheduled for Feb. 18.

"I think you strengthen the speaker by attacks of this kind," Udall said. "Many members haven't made up their minds about the next speaker, but if they are forced to choose sides in the middle of this session,

they will choose the sitting speaker."

Technically the speaker is elected by the full membership, although minority party members traditionally vote for the man chosen by the majority. However, this means that to unseat a speaker would require not just a majority of Democrats but a majority of the 435-member House.

"I think we should get behind the speaker and work with him until November, and then try for a new man," Udall said.

Albert His First Choice

His first choice would be Albert, who said recently he would not be a candidate. "Carl Albert would beat McCormack if he ran," Udall said, arguing that Albert could change his mind after the November elections if the revolt against McCormack is out in the open.

"If there is a stronger candidate around I would get behind him," Udall said. But he admitted

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ted to some reservations about one frequently mentioned name, that of Ways and Means Chairman Wilbur Mills of Arkansas.

Udall said he would have to be convinced that Mills was going to change his outlook on civil

rights questions and some other issues where he has consistently voted with the Southern bloc.

The Arizona congressman, a younger brother of former Interior Secretary Stewart Udall, said he was not formally announcing his candidacy now because it is premature. "It's time for jockeying and conversation now," he said, and for an announcement "shortly after the elections."

The recent indictment of McCormack aide Martin Sweig for alleged misuse of his position will have little bearing on the fight, according to Udall. "I've never talked to a member who thinks John McCormack is less than completely honest," he said.

New View of Job

The real issue, he said, is the view from the speaker's rostrum. "Under Sam Rayburn and men like Cannon and Longworth this was the second most powerful office in the country," he said.

"John McCormack's view of his office is a new one. He doesn't view it as his job to take positions. It seems his view is to be a presiding officer who schedules bills and allows debate, who provides a rallying point for the party in office."

In this regard Udall admitted that one issue that rankled many members was McCormack's use of the leadership to help Rep. James Wright, D-Tex., to bring before the House a resolution widely interpreted as a vote of confidence on President Nixon's Vietnam policies.

Similar Complaints

"This is just one thing, though," Udall said. "The Democrats think they have been made to needlessly walk the plank several times."

Waldie's complaints with McCormack are similar, but he is unwilling to wait until the next organization vote, in January 1971.

He circulated a letter to the 245 House Democrats saying he will offer this proposal at the Feb. 18 caucus: "Resolved, that this Democratic caucus expresses a lack of confidence in the present House Democratic leadership."

That represents an attack on McCormack, Albert and Whip Hale Boggs of Louisiana as well.

Waldie said his discontent began in earnest when the Democratic leadership pushed through the pro-Nixon Vietnam resolution. He said that it was not really an endorsement of the Nixon policies, and the leadership should have made it clear.

He said his resolution is doomed to failure "but I am hopeful this motion will cause many to think the unthinkable and do the undoable."

"No one really looks to the House or its leadership as an authority or as hope in this trying period for our country," Waldie said.